HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

AGRI • NUMBER 108 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, October 2, 2018

Chair

Mr. Pat Finnigan

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Tuesday, October 2, 2018

● (0845)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. We are continuing our study on the mental health challenges that Canadian farmers, ranchers, and producers face.

This morning, we welcome René Beauregard, who is the Director General of the organization Au coeur des familles agricoles.

Welcome, Mr. Beauregard.

Mr. René Beauregard (Director General, Au coeur des familles agricoles): Good morning.

The Chair: From the same organization, we also welcome Nancy Langevin, who is a field worker with the Travailleur de rang program.

Welcome, Ms. Langevin.

Ms. Nancy Langevin (Field Worker, Le travailleur de rang, Au coeur des familles agricoles): Thank you.

The Chair: There will be no videoconference because this morning's session is televised. It is not possible for a television broadcast and a videoconference to occur simultaneously in this room. Pierrette Desrosiers, who is an occupational psychologist, will therefore participate in the session by telephone.

Can you hear me, Ms. Desrosiers?

As I'm not getting an answer, we will start with the witnesses who are with us in the room.

You each have six minutes for your presentation.

Mr. René Beauregard: Thank you for your welcome this morning.

First of all, I'm going to talk about our organization's beginnings and explain why it exists.

Au coeur des familles agricoles is an organization that has been in existence since 2003. It was created by people in the agricultural sector, who, in the early 2000s, observed an increase in distress among agricultural producers. They saw that those producers were not seeking help from the health care system. When they did so, unfortunately, they saw that the health care network was not tailored to the reality of those in the world of agriculture.

The specific nature of Au coeur des familles agricoles as an organization is based on the street worker model, but it is tailored to the agricultural sector. We established a "field worker" service, which provides proactive and preventative responses. We don't wait for producers to seek out our assistance. We travel to see people on the farm. This is what distinguishes our services from those offered by the Quebec health care network.

We also do what we call "milk runs", like a truck driver who goes from door to door picking up milk on farms. Our field workers travel and randomly visit farms to meet producers, talk to them and find out how they are doing in terms of their mental health, but mainly to raise awareness about our organization and our services.

Our field workers provide psychosocial support, within the limits of their knowledge and abilities. If the needs of the producers exceed our skills or our knowledge, we accompany them through the health system; we do not leave them to their own devices. We help them to find help. We are aware that, on their own, they would not take steps to find those services.

These workers have knowledge and hold either a bachelor's degree or a college diploma in social work. So they have the skills to work with an agricultural clientele. Another very important prerequisite for us as a determining factor in hiring an individual, is knowledge of the agricultural sector. The workers currently employed by the organization are all women. They have skills and knowledge that allow them to quickly build relationships with farmers. The relationship of trust grows quickly because the farmers know that the person standing in front of them understands their reality.

Our services are provided around the clock, seven days a week. We also offer a respite service. Our respite centre in Saint-Hyacinthe is able to welcome farmers from all across Quebec and to house those who have an urgent need for rest. While there, they meet with a worker on a daily basis for a week and can even come back, if their need is greater.

In 2017, we made 1,157 contacts with agricultural clients. The producers came to meet with us because the care offered by the health system did not match their needs. Because of our expertise and our knowledge of the agricultural sector, they came to us in order to avail themselves of our services.

Sixty-two per cent of the individuals who came to us seeking assistance were men. We start from the premise that men are already a difficult clientele to reach when the issue is a mental health problem. This demonstrates just how positive the approach we use with them is.

● (0850)

Essentially, we cover all types of production. This is perhaps more related to the announcement that was made yesterday, but I must tell you again that, over the past two years, most of the people who have called upon our assistance have come from the dairy sector. In fact, 72% of the requests for support that we have received have come from people in this sector. We provide our services in Quebec. We have established contacts in 11 administrative regions, but we have a presence in 7 regions.

In closing, I would like to tell you that 25% of our funding comes from grants. The rest of our funding comes from fundraising, donations and sponsorships that we receive from agricultural businesses, the businesses that work with farmers.

That concludes my presentation on the organization Au coeur des familles agricoles.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beauregard.

Ms. Desrosiers, can you hear us?

Ms. Pierrette Desrosiers (Occupational Psychologist, Pierrette Desrosiers Psycoaching): Yes, I can hear you.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Langevin, you have six minutes.

Ms. Nancy Langevin: Good morning.

I'm a social worker. Since 2016, I have been a field worker with the organization called Au coeur des familles agricoles in the Chaudière-Appalaches region of Quebec.

This summer, a psychologist from the local community health centre contacted me about a person that he had been working with for quite some time. This lady was experiencing some difficulties. Given my expertise in agriculture, he asked for my assistance in working as a team to help her. Our meetings were mainly about my helping the woman buying her share from her parents.

In recent weeks, I received a letter from her that I would like to read:

"It's over for me, Nancy, I'm giving up on life. Nothing's keeping me here on Earth. Everyone I love is constantly abandoning me. My plan is gradually taking shape. I will be alone this weekend, no [Charlie], no one with me. It will be the perfect time to leave, to quietly fall asleep and never wake up. So don't go running to my parents, I don't want to hear from them. They are the reason I have been in such a state for so many weeks. [Sylvain] is going hunting for all of next week. He has a lot of other things on his mind than me. My latest has taken off; he said all kinds of fine words, then threw me in the garbage like a piece of trash. [Stéphanie] is far too busy to realize that I'm not doing well. It's now or never, if I want to do anything about it. Every time I take a step in hat direction, something always comes up. But this time, it's over. I'm at the end of my rope and I have no way out. I have no strength left to fight. At least, you have your family to help you, to support you and to love you. I am just a bad mother who's having a hard time taking care of her daughter. I'm always there when others need me, yet, as always, no one takes the time to listen to my calls for help. By the end of the week, there will be no more [Cindy], everyone will be rid of me."

I received this email at 7:45 in the morning. I must say that I was pretty shaken by this letter. I quickly grabbed my phone and called the author of the email directly to tell her I was there, that I was there for her, and that I was very concerned after reading this letter.

Why did this woman choose me? A psychologist had been helping her for just over a year, while I have only been in the picture for a few weeks.

As I said just now when I began, it was because of my expertise in agriculture. As you gathered, when I introduced myself, I said that I was a former dairy farmer. The fact that I am a former dairy farmer, allowed me to establish a strong bond with the person who came to meet me.

What did I do? I called her. Fifteen minutes later, I realized that her daughter was standing behind her. I asked her if her daughter was going to daycare that morning. She said yes. I asked her why she wouldn't drive her to school and then we could talk again afterwards. She said that was a very good idea.

In that time, I quickly contacted the psychologist. We had already been communicating because, in the last few weeks, the lady had given us permission to work together for her well-being.

The psychologist was surprised. He told me that he had seen the lady the previous week and that she was doing very well. Actually, he added that he was even surprised to see how well she was doing. I asked him what we were going to do.

My role as a field worker really allowed me to stay in touch with everything in the agricultural field, while the psychologist took care of finding a shelter for the woman for the weekend. As a result, someone from the Urgence-Détresse hotline called her to see if she could come to the crisis centre over the weekend.

Our common aim was to reduce the stressors that this woman was experiencing. For my part, I called her employer, a local dairy farmer, to let him know that the mental health of his employee had deteriorated considerably in recent days. I also called her parents to inform them about their daughter's mental health. Logically, her parents should have been aware of the situation, but in this case, they were not.

I didn't mention that, for several weeks, this woman had been experiencing financial difficulties, a separation, a mental health problem in addition to a family dispute, which is related to the succession, as you can well imagine.

The only good news in this letter was that it was Tuesday morning at the time and the woman was planning to carry out her plan on Friday.

● (0855)

So that gave us time to put a safety net in place so that the lady would have good support.

As I said, my work is really with the agriculture. I did not interfere with the work the psychologist was doing. The psychologist, though, called the woman towards the end of the morning. I called her at 10 a.m. and he did so at 11:30. He made an appointment with her for the next day, and we stayed in touch by email. So there is one intervention among the many I have done.

A little later, if I have a bit of time left, I will talk about the milk runs and what they mean. We don't wait for people to reach out for help. I just show up on the farms, I introduce myself and I explain the mission of our organization. Then I take a look at the people there. These types of meetings often don't last longer than five minutes, but they can run to 15 or 20 minutes, and in some cases, I'll spend the entire morning on site, if I came at a good time and the person really needed to talk.

Thank you.

● (0900)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Langevin. You will have the opportunity to answer questions from the members.

Ms. Desrosiers, you have six minutes.

Ms. Pierrette Desrosiers: That's perfect.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you.

I am speaking to you as a farmer's daughter, a farmer's sister and a farmer's wife, but also as a specialized psychologist who, for over 20 years, has been working with farming businesses. So today I will present two aspects of the situation.

I will be talking to you about a new threat that is coming on top of all the stressors we are already familiar with, and I will talk about our urgent need to train support workers.

On top of all of the stressors in farming which you are probably familiar with, I would like to draw your attention today to a growing threat; it is coming from animal rights activists. In 2010, Benoît Gagnon, a doctoral candidate at the École de criminologie at the Université de Montréal was already saying that animal rights activists represented a terrorist threat. That's a bit how the movement is being described. It's not new, but it could become increasingly significant. Some authors believe that it is the next great revolution.

Who are these animal rights activists? You will see why it is so important to talk about them. First and foremost, they are vegans, though not all vegans are activists. They believe in antispecism, that is, the idea that animals are equal to humans. They want the use of animals in any way to be completely abolished. So, of course, they are against agricultural production that enables the consumption of meat and meat products, and they are against the idea of owning animals as pets. They agitate to shut down packing plants. This is very important and we must be concerned with the growing strength of this movement because we know that more and more millennials are vegans. That said, I repeat that not all vegans are animal rights activists.

In addition, because of the power of social media today, a single video going viral can inflict a great deal of damage on an entire industry. People are also increasingly concerned about animal welfare, health and the environment, which in itself is all well and good. That said, there are far fewer farms today, which means that fewer and fewer people understand what the farming is all about.

Whom do these animal rights activists target? Of course, the first ones in their sights are the producers. Today, as well as being called polluters, they are accused of being aggressors and rapists, because of artificial insemination, and child kidnappers and killers. You know, those words have extremely serious consequences. As one farmer told me, when he gets up in the morning and he sees that type of thing on Facebook, he's already wondering how he is going to cope. It adds a lot of stress and distress. I must point out that psychological distress is very prevalent among Canadian farmers, as several studies have shown.

Producers, artificial inseminators, those who ship animals, veterinarians too, packing plant staff, butchers, everyone in the agri-food business, that is, are affected by the animal rights people. The consequence is that our producers are increasingly subject to psychological violence, harassment and online bullying. That can increase the conflicts and, of course, the distress. A number of experts say that a major source of stress is developing and developing rapidly. So I wanted to draw your attention to this new threat, one that is adding to a major source of distress that already exists.

My second point is about what we need. We need more and more responders. Mr. Beaureard and Ms. Langevin said just now that some factors are unique to agricultural producers. We must not respond in the same way with men, with family businesses, and with our unique system, and we do not have enough people trained in the area. We also do not have enough psychologists who fully understand the realities of agriculture. We must therefore train more psychologists both in private clinics and in the health care system. We also need more front-line workers. We have to help and support them more, and continue to train them.

We certainly also have to train entrepreneurs in agriculture at the basic level, to get ahead of the game, to allow them to develop greater entrepreneurial skills, to better manage stress, change, and the work-life balance. Basically, we have to develop leadership skills so that they can face the issues and challenges of today and tomorrow.

Agriculture is getting more complex everyday, they say. In order to be able to face tomorrow's challenges, we need a high degree of entrepreneurial skill. So we have to help our agricultural entrepreneurs before the situation gets worse. To prevent them from sinking into distress, we have to be able to put initiatives in place so that they are better able to face the problems. In agriculture, the distress level is high and it directly affects the entrepreneurs, their families, and the agricultural economy.

There is only one conclusion. We have to invest for and with our agricultural producers, because leaders in better health will help to improve the health of our agricultural industry and our society.

● (0905)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Desrosiers.

Now we will start to go around the table.

If you want to ask Ms. Desrosiers any questions, can you please let me know?

[*English*]

Welcome, Mr. Motz, to our committee. Thank you for being here as a replacement.

First will be Mr. Dreeshen for six minutes.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I will try to split my time. I know Mr. Motz has a question.

First of all, though, I would like to speak with Pierrette Desrosiers.

The things you talked about are exactly the key issues in agriculture. I have said for years that the issues we have with, as I believe you indicated, animal rights activists and other groups and organizations that look at.... I'm a grain farmer, so they look at other non-tariff trade barriers and issues—such as GMOs, neonicotinoids, trace elements—and all of these sorts of things that are done to protect other people's investments. When farmers look at these things, they understand what is happening. There is a discord between agriculture and those who live in urban centres.

Another aspect—and I believe this is a point for other guests as well—is the fact that the farm is your workplace and the workplace is your farm, and the massive investments you have are always in jeopardy.

Then we have all of these different groups who just don't care. I look at the A&W ad that talks about no added hormones, where you go from five nanograms of estrogen to seven, if it is used, while the bun would have thousands of nanograms. These things are frustrating and they are done simply for market share.

I wonder if you could comment on that, and then I will give the rest of my time to Mr. Motz.

Thank you.

● (0910)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pierrette Desrosiers: Do I understand that the question is for me?

The Chair: Yes, go ahead, Ms. Desrosiers.

Ms. Pierrette Desrosiers: As I understand the question, it is about the animal rights activists. As fewer and fewer people understand how extremely complex an agricultural business is, and as society is tending to consider the work of farmers less natural and less valuable, an enormous amount of education needs to be done, starting at the base, in the schools, to explain it and to reestablish its value. I think we have no choice. In order to counter the misinformation, we are going to have to inform the public at large, and educate young and old alike, so that they understand how much respect farmers have for the environment and for animals, and how excellent a job they do.

The priority has to be in valuing farmers. People have to be informed, educated and sensitized, because, unfortunately, some people are spreading viral messages that our farmers find destructive and difficult to accept. As there are fewer and fewer farmers, we have no choice in the matter. My fondest dream, you know, would be for every child to have the opportunity to go to a farm at least once. A huge number of adults will never have seen one in their lives. We have reached the point where, apparently, 7% of American adults think that chocolate milk comes from brown cows.

The Chair: Ms. Desrosiers, unfortunately, we are short of time. Let us move to another question.

The floor is yours, Mr. Motz.

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the panel for being here.

My riding is made up of a mostly rural agriculture area—30,000 square kilometres. My heritage is also in agriculture. I still farm and ranch, so I have a deep appreciation for the impact and importance of farming to our economy, but also for Canadians in the production of good food.

I know from people in my riding that stress and anxiety went up last summer when they heard from the current government and were labelled as tax cheats. The government was looking at ways to get more from them—taking money out of their pockets—making it more difficult for them to pass their farms on to their next generation.

In my area, the language that was used in accusing people of that caused anger and frustration, and it really showed a disconnect between our agriculture community and the current government.

Does that kind of language create problems for those who are struggling already? That would be one question.

The other one would be, did you observe any impacts on the farming community that you interact with on the policies that were brought out, or the messaging that was used, that would impact them even more, or did they just internalize the attacks that they received?

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Beauregard: If we look at the assistance claims we get from producers, we realize that, frequently, the problem has a number of sides. Often, the problem is triggered at a certain point when several reasons accumulate.

As I mentioned earlier, over the past two years, the vast majority of our assistance has gone to dairy farmers, particularly in Quebec. This stands in contrast to what we were doing a decade ago, when we were mainly helping hog and beef producers. This change is due to the insecurity created as a result of the Transpacific Partnership negotiations, the changes to NAFTA and the diafiltered milk issue.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beauregard. Unfortunately, we are out of time.

Mr. Breton, you have six minutes.

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today.

I want to extend a special greeting to the representatives of Au coeur des familles agricoles from Saint-Hyacinthe, near my riding. A special hello to Mr. Beauregard, who was very humble during his presentation. In fact, in addition to being the director general of that organization, he is the mayor of Saint-Joachim-de-Shefford, a rural municipality in my riding. He is also a former farmer, so he really knows what he is talking about.

First, I want to thank you for your excellent work, Ms. Langevin and Mr. Beauregard. Your organization is a model, and we would like to replicate it, because it provides significant respite and support for farmers in our region. So we are lucky to have you with us. My sincere thanks.

Several studies have been done in the United States and Canada; they found that farmers were twice as likely to suffer from mental health issues than the general population. Mr. Beauregard and Ms. Langevin, could you talk to us about the anxiety and stress you see in your work, and tell us the top three or four causes?

● (0915)

Ms. Nancy Langevin: I will answer that question.

Actually, it is what Mr. Beauregard was talking about. Often their frustration has built up over time. Since we are talking about dairy producers, let me remind you that they experience the same problems as the rest of us: separations, deaths, accidents. I do not know whether you saw the news last week, but two individuals died after falling into a silo. That kind of situation causes stress too. Furthermore, these days, the issue of supply management is adding to the frustration and stress already being felt by dairy producers.

Market forces constantly push them to increase their company's efficiency and profitability, and producers are starting to crumble under this ever-present demand. The message they are hearing is that they must get bigger and bigger to become more efficient. However, they are not prepared to sacrifice the family farm they have cherished all those years.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Of course we are aware that a farmer's work is more solitary than most professions. I imagine that you refer some of the mental health problems that you uncover to physicians and the health care system, correct?

Mr. Beauregard, the respite process that you mentioned earlier seems quite interesting. When a physician's prescription for farmers is to get out of their working environment in order to rest and recover their health, it must not be easy for a farmer to do. His workplace is often in the same place as his home, two steps from where he lives. He hears all the noises and sees all the work to be done. Do I understand that they can actually come to you to rest and recover their health.

Mr. René Beauregard: Correct. Our respite home welcomes producers from all over the province who feel the need to take a step back, to rest and to recover their mental health. They stay with us at no cost to them and they have daily access to the care provided by workers like Nancy.

However, the fact of having to leave the farm to come and stay with us creates its own problems since they have to find someone else to do the work when they are away. Leaving their farms and putting their business in the hands of someone who is not familiar with it may well cause more problems than if they decided to stay. That is why we have to find the proper balance.

Currently, the people who come to us for some respite are often those who do not operate their businesses by themselves. Then someone can continue to work when they are away. Unfortunately, we know that a lot of farms are operated by a husband and wife, each of whom has needs as great as, if not greater than, those experienced by other producers. They cannot simply up and leave their farms for a specific period.

Mr. Pierre Breton: I would now like to talk about farm outreach workers, which I understand are mainly women. Farm outreach is an interesting model. How many of these workers do you have in your organization?

Mr. René Beauregard: We currently have five. Three are already working in Montérégie, central Quebec and Chaudière-Appalaches. Two others are starting next week in the Eastern Townships and the Mauricie region. We also have partnerships with two organizations in the Laurentians and the Lower St. Lawrence area. We will eventually have someone in Témiscamingue as well, and two other regions have approached us to find out whether we will be able to eventually offer our services there.

We have realized that the closer we are to farmers, the more they come to get help. In the past, we were located only in Montérégie. We wanted to offer our services to farmers across the province, but it was harder for us to interact with them. Today, we have managed to develop this network, and we are now closer to farmers and can intervene more quickly to help them when they need it. We meet with farmers within one to two weeks at most, which is much faster than the health care system.

● (0920)

Mr. Pierre Breton: Thank you for your testimony. It is greatly appreciated.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Breton and Mr. Beauregard.

We'll now move on to Mr. MacGregor, who has six minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Langevin and Mr. Beauregard, you both mentioned dairy farmers. In your opening statement, you said 72% of the requests came from dairy farmers. Does that correspond with the percentage they represent in your region, or is it higher?

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Beauregard: What you're asking is whether the percentage corresponds to the number of dairy farmers in the province. That is not necessarily the case. We are talking about 72% of the 1,157 requests for help we responded to, not 72% of Quebec dairy farmers. That is an important nuance.

The numbers reflect the help that we have been giving over the past two years. The numbers that I gave you are from 2017, when we responded to 1,157 requests. By the end of August 2018, we had already responded to close to 1,000 requests, and there are still four months left in the year.

Those who come to get help are mainly dairy farmers. As I explained earlier, that was not the case in the past. In the past, we were helping a lot of beef and pork producers. Suppose there are 5,000 dairy farmers. We did not provide assistance to 72% of them. Rather, 72% of the total number of requests for help that we received, 1,157, were from dairy farmers.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

Ms. Langevin, in your exchange with Mr. Breton, when you were talking about the stressors and made reference to the supply management system, is this coming within the context of the uncertainty that supply management farmers are facing, given the percentages that are being hived off through the comprehensive economic trade agreement, the CPTPP and now the new agreement with the United States? Are dairy farmers getting stressed because they feel that the ground is shifting beneath their feet? They get promised one thing, but then what comes is completely different. Is that the experience?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nancy Langevin: Yes. I have spoken to a number of farmers and I can tell you that they feel as though they have been abandoned. They are saying that a good supply management system gives them a certain quality of life and helps them to be able to predict their income and expenditures.

We talked about expansion earlier. Many dairy farmers made big investments and now find themselves in debt and in very difficult circumstances.

The answer to your question is yes.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Yes, I agree. I think it's shameful that our system is having to pay for another jurisdiction's overproduction problems, and I know it's the same for the dairy farmers in my region and all supply-managed farmers. The system has allowed them to set a long-term plan to make those investments, and they are told one thing, but then something completely different happens, so I can very much empathize with that.

I want to move on.

In our last committee meeting, we had some fascinating testimony from Dr. Jones-Bitton from the University of Guelph. She talked about a bell curve showing the different kinds of stresses: green stress, amber stress and red stress. If you operate too much in the red stress zone, you get feelings of being overwhelmed, of loss, of hopelessness. There's good stress and bad stress.

She offered three recommendations. One of them was to support evidence-based training programs for agriculture. In your opinion, what would this entail and how do you think the federal government specifically is best suited to deliver them, given that we ultimately want to produce recommendations for them?

I know it's a big question. You can both take a crack at it.

● (0925)

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Beauregard: I have seen what the Au coeur des familles agricoles organization has accomplished in Quebec over the past 16 years. Unfortunately, the faster pace of life for farmers and the stress that goes along with that is having a negative impact on their mental health. This never used to be considered as anything different from what the rest of the general population experiences, but we need to consider the unique circumstances of farmers.

It would be a good idea to begin by conducting a study to recognize that difference. We need to recognize that, for farmers, their workplace and their business is also their home. During the day, a farmer's father is his business partner, but in the evening, his father is his father. Often, they live next door to each other. All of those factors make a difference. This is the only type of business where that happens.

There are many family businesses in other sectors. We are often told that there are many father-son businesses in the private sector. However, at night, they are not living on the same property. Their workplace is not in their backyard and their father's house is not right next door to remind them of the things that did not necessarily go well that day.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beauregard. Unfortunately, we are pressed for time.

Mr. Drouin, you have six minutes.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Beauregard, Ms. Langevin and Ms. Desrosiers, thank you for the work that you do.

I am not a young farmer, but some of my friends are. We do not have these services in our area yet, but I tip my hat to you. I was once in the right place at the right time. I'm not sure whether the person was suicidal, but she was definitely in distress. I imagine, Ms. Langevin, that this is what you experience every day with farmers.

Mr. Beauregard, you mentioned situations where farms are run by a father and son or a father and daughter. In my family, my father and grandfather sat on the same town council and they did not always see eye to eye. My grandmother always told them that they were not allowed to talk politics at the dinner table at home. However, farmers have a completely different reality since the whole family works on the farm.

How do you manage these crises? I imagine that there are sometimes family arguments and that they cause stress.

Mr. René Beauregard: Yes, they do.

I will let Ms. Langevin answer you since she is a field worker.

Ms. Nancy Langevin: Many of the cases I deal with involve family conflict, and I gave an example of that earlier. I give those involved the chance to express themselves, to communicate. As a social worker, I can provide mediation services. I meet with each person individually to prepare them for the family meeting. Then, everyone sits down together and I am there to provide support. My role is not to tell them what to do but to give them a chance to express their views. When people are caught up in their work on the farm, they often keep a lot of things to themselves. However, when everyone takes the time to sit down together, it gives them an opportunity to talk things through.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Ms. Langevin, you mentioned the importance of things being done by farmers for farmers. You used to be a dairy farmer. Why is such an intermediary important for those who use your services?

Ms. Nancy Langevin: It is still hard for me to understand because it seems as though a connection is made very quickly. I don't need to start talking about farming for people to feel as though I understand them. That happens automatically. They also don't need to tell me very much for me to understand them.

Earlier, we gave the example of a farmer who goes to the doctor and is prescribed a month of rest. I do not do that when people come to my office because, if I did, I would lose them right away. Instead, I suggest that they take two hours out of the 90 hours of work they do a week to take care of their mental health. Over time, they realize that two hours a week isn't enough. They do the calculations, because they are used to doing that sort of thing, and realize that they are only taking about 15 minutes day. They hardly have time to begin thinking about their mental health before that time is up. It is not enough.

I would therefore never recommend that someone take a week of holidays because, as Mr. Beauregard was saying, it would only serve to increase that individual's stress. If I were to recommend that to farmers, they would would wonder how they could do that, who would look after their animals and who would look after their farm while they were away. Instead, as I just explained, I make recommendations to help them try to find a balance. I once helped a farmer who was working 60 hours a week. He ended up cutting his work week by 30 hours himself. However, if I had told him to do that, I would have lost him.

● (0930)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Last week, some witnesses told us that, when farmers are prescribed a month of rest, they unfortunately have to stay in their workplace. Their workplace is not separate from their home like it is for most people. If I need to rest at home, I can put some physical distance between myself and my workplace since I do not live on Parliament Hill, and that is a good thing.

What do you do when someone really needs rest? How do you provide support since you seem to be saying that you would not recommend that they stop work completely?

Ms. Nancy Langevin: Farmers know very little about mental health. They know about physical health, but not about mental health. When I meet with them, we work together to determine what they could do in their environment. As we said earlier, all their work is done in their backyard or near their home.

How can these farmers take care of their mental health? It can be as simple as driving around their property on an ATV just to relax. Those are the kinds of recommendations that I make to them. The fact that I am a farm outreach worker enables me to go and see people who cannot come meet with us or who do not have time to do so on their own farms.

Last fall, I went to one farmer's place on corn silage day. I asked him if I could ride on the tractor with him. He asked me if I would really do that. I said yes, and I took advantage of that opportunity to help him. He was hauling boxes of corn silage. I was there with him, helping him when he needed it.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Let's talk about the stigma associated with mental health problems. There are many publicity campaigns to try to combat that stigma.

We know that the provinces are responsible for health care, but what else could the Canadian Mental Health Association do to address what farmers are experiencing?

Mr. René Beauregard: Quebec has already begun making farmers aware of mental health problems so that they know that there is no shame in getting help. We no longer talk about distress or mental health but about the well-being of farmers. They are used to hearing about the well-being of animals. We are talking about their own well-being.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Beauregard.

Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

Ms. Nassif, you have six minutes.

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): In Canada, health care, including mental health care, is a jurisdiction shared by the federal, provincial and territorial governments.

What could the federal government do to help the farming community? What resources should it offer in order to do that?

Mr. René Beauregard: I think Ms. Desrosiers has something to say. I will let her take that question since she hasn't had many opportunities to speak so far.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Of course. Go ahead, Ms. Desrosiers.

Ms. Pierrette Desrosiers: As I was saying, the federal government needs to provide funding to train the psychologists and social workers in the system so that they better understand the problems farmers are experiencing.

As Ms. Langevin and Mr. Beauregard said, it doesn't take much to establish credibility, but it also doesn't take much to undermine it either. When psychologists and social workers don't know enough about how a farm works, farmers may think that they do not understand their reality or that they are not really listening and may decide to abandon the process and stop consulting with anyone. The government needs to provide funding so that more professionals work with our farm outreach workers and are able to respond to requests for help and take over for outreach workers if necessary.

Those involved must understand the reality of farmers. That is what is currently lacking.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Thank you, Ms. Desrosiers.

Is there anything you would like to add, Mr. Beauregard?

Mr. René Beauregard: As I was saying earlier, the best way to encourage farmers to get help is to make them understand that getting help is not a bad thing. There could be a program to encourage farmers to get help from the health care system when possible but also from workers who are there for them, such as those at Au coeur des familles agricoles or other organizations in other parts of the country. I think that is important.

For the past two years, Quebec's agricultural producers' union, UPA, has been talking a lot about farmers' psychological distress and trying to find solutions. That means that the people who come looking for help are less and less ashamed to do so. Instead, they are seeing it as a positive thing.

The federal government would do well to look at what could be done to further encourage farmers to get help. It could offer farmers in other provinces services similar to the ones we offer. I have seen the positive impact that our work has had in Quebec. We do not have workers in every region, but we should, because there are agricultural communities everywhere.

Year after year, we struggle to find funding so that our organization can continue its operations and continue to grow. In the past, we wanted to expand our services to offer them in every region. Now, people in various regions are calling us. They are aware of their difficulties and are unable to find the proper resources to respond to those needs in their communities.

What can we do to meet those needs? Should the government create a financial support program for workers who take training specifically designed to help farmers? That is what is being done in Quebec. Suicide sentinels have been trained in co-operation with the UPA and the Association québécoise de prévention du suicide so that there is a program designed especially for farmers. The government could implement support services, similar to the ones we have, for farmers across the county.

● (0935)

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Thank you.

According to a 30-year-old study on suicide among Canadian farmers, suicide rates are twice as high among Quebec farmers as in the general population.

Do you think that's still the case? We don't have any recent studies. These figures are 30 years old.

Mr. René Beauregard: It's hard to say. We don't have access to those figures. With respect to suicide, however, I can tell you that, in the vast majority of cases, people who seek our organization's help aren't suicidal. There may be a lot of suicides in the farming sector, but there's a lot more distress than suicide as such. Suicide is final, but the fact remains that 95% of people who consult our organization aren't suicidal: they're distressed.

We have to pay special attention to people who are going to commit the irreversible act of suicide. It's very important to find solutions to prevent them from doing so. However, the vast majority of farmers aren't quite there. They're the ones we have to support and see on a proactive and preventive basis, precisely so they don't go as far as suicide. Both actions are important: we don't want these people to reach the point of suicide, and we have to do all we can to make sure they don't.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Ms. Langevin, what do you think are the essential elements of a mental health strategy to reduce the suicide rate among farmers?

The Chair: We unfortunately can't address that question, but we may be able to do so later on.

[*English*]

Mr. Shipley, you have six minutes.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Thank you very much for being a part of our discussion.

Nancy, I want to say thank you to you.

In terms of the intervenors—and Mr. Beauregard, you talked about that also—there were 1,157 interventions, and you have five intervenors.

How did you get trained? What took you to being part of what you call "the milk run"? I also have a question about that. How did it get started that you just make cold calls to farms?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nancy Langevin: "Milk runs" are really for preventive purposes. People who experience psychological distress or, ultimately, who have suicidal ideas don't sit on committees, don't belong to the UPA or its executive and have no municipal role to play. They are very isolated people. We talked about them earlier. The purpose of "milk runs" is to reach the most vulnerable individuals.

I've come up with a way of doing this since I don't have a list that tells me where farmers live on a range. I say I go to an RCM and go up and down the range. I don't stop at every place since farmers talk to each other. I stop to introduce myself and so on. That's how things started. We want to reach the people we don't see.

● (0940)

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley: You talked about training for intervenors. How does that happen? Who does the training? Who should be doing the training? What would be the qualifiers to have an intervenor trained?

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Beauregard: When we say training, we mean academic training. These people have bachelor's degrees in social work or college diplomas in the field. Their basic training as intervenors is based on that. Agricultural training—

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley: I'm talking about an intervenor like Nancy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Beauregard: Yes.

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley: Professional psychologists have their role, but two other components are really critical. One is because Nancy and those like her come alongside somebody and give them hope. That's one of the key ingredients, I believe.

As for the second part, is there someone who comes along and puts together some financial support by collecting the information of creditors, and then an understanding person sits with these individuals to help? Is there someone to talk to about that when you find yourself closed in?

You talked about the financial stress, and I would suggest that yesterday is going to be an additional stress added to much of the farming community. How do we deal with it? I was told back in the 1980s that what happens is you can't think straight. You just can't pull it all apart to categorize the issues you need to prioritize to look at your financial situation. Is there a financial component to this assistance?

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Beauregard: Do you mean financial assistance that would be provided to farmers?

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Beauregard: Do you mean financial assistance to obtain services from Au coeur des familles agricoles?

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley: I mean both.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Beauregard: Our services are free of charge, and we provide them across the province. When a farmer comes to see us, support services from intervenors like Ms. Langevin, both respite and accommodation services, are provided free of charge. That's why this isn't a factor that prevents people from seeking help. So regardless of the size of the farm business, whether it's small or very large, it costs nothing to come and get help from us.

There are probably provincial programs to meet similar needs among people experiencing financial problems on the farm, who need outside help in trying to get back on track.

As odd as it may seem, when farmers come to us for help, even if they have financial problems, that's not what they mainly talk about. It's one factor among many. Consequently, our services aren't based solely on financial problems.

I hope that answers your question.

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley: Are you finding that addictions because of the anxiety become an issue in any of the cases you deal with?

● (0945)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nancy Langevin: I can't say whether there are more substance abuse problems, but they do exist. As was said, they stay in one single place. It's easier for them because they don't have to drive their vehicles.

People with alcohol problems start drinking early in the morning, whereas people who have drinking problems but work outside the home figure they'll open the bottle when they get home from work. However, farmers start drinking early in the day.

The Chair: Unfortunately, that's all the time we have for this first hour of testimony.

Mr. Beauregard, Ms. Langevin and Ms. Desrosiers, thank you for appearing before us this morning to tell us about a very important topic for our farmers.

We will now suspend for a few minutes and then hear from the second panel of witnesses.

●

_____ (Pause) _____

●

● (0950)

[*English*]

The Chair: We will recommence.

With us today, we have, as an individual farmer, Mr. Sean Stanford. Thank you for being here, Mr. Stanford.

We also have, from LPG Farms, Mehgin Reynolds, Owner-Operator. Welcome.

[*Translation*]

We have been informed that Mr. Stéphane Bisaillon will probably be late. We will assign him his seat when he arrives.

[*English*]

To start, Mr. Stanford, you can present your opening statement for up to six minutes. Thank you.

Mr. Sean Stanford (Farmer, As an Individual): Hi, everybody. My name is Sean Stanford. I'm a 34-year-old grain farmer from southern Alberta. I farm there with my wife and our two young children.

I'd like to begin by telling you that I'm not weak and I'm not any less of a man; I'm just a little sick. I suffer from anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. I was diagnosed nearly two years ago and have been on multiple medications and seen multiple therapists to help me with my conditions.

While I may not be different from many Canadians, the industry that I work in makes these conditions a bit harder to deal with. There are actually many extra challenges that farmers and producers have to deal with that the general population does not.

Farming is one of the few occupations that are highly dependent on weather. As you're well aware, no one can control the weather. I can tell you it is quite stressful to know that the biggest factor in your paycheque for the year is out of your hands. There are many farmers back home who have not finished harvest yet, and it is covered with snow. After a very, very dry summer and now a wet fall, emotions are running quite high.

Farmers also spend many hours and days isolated on their land. I myself have gone days on end without seeing another person for the entire day. This gives your mind too much time to play tricks on you. It gives you too much time to second-guess yourself and think about whether or not you're making the right decisions for your business. It does not give you an opportunity to think about what's actually happening in the real world back home. You can get lonely out there and miss your family. Isolation also means less access to professional help such as doctors, counsellors and psychologists. All three of these professions are integral to the proper recovery of someone suffering from mental health conditions.

Experts say that multiple elements are required to keep a person healthy. Included in those are proper exercise, nutrition, relaxation time and sleep. I can personally tell you that it is nearly impossible to get all these elements in as a farmer during the busy season. Working 100 hours or more per week is not abnormal. Having a meal that does not come out of a lunch box is also uncommon. Have you ever tried to do jumping jacks in a tractor? It's not that easy.

Here are the big questions: what resources are available, and what is missing?

Rural Canada has been shrinking. Our local hospital and doctor's office closed up many years ago. For any counselling or therapy, I need to travel about 30 miles. I know that it's a lot longer and further for many others. Then to actually get an appointment with some of these professionals, the wait can be many weeks. This is unacceptable. The cost of these services is also quite high. We need better and cheaper access to these health professionals.

I had my first interaction with the counsellor through my local fire department. I have volunteered there for 14 years, and that's where my PTSD stems from. When I asked my fire chief to find me some help, there was already a set of resources lined up to help me. Emergency services seem to have the proper channels in place already. As far as I know, there are no dedicated resources like these in place for farmers and agricultural producers.

Many of the medications used to treat anxiety and depression can be quite expensive as well. Thankfully, I am able to afford Blue Cross coverage for my family, but this does not cover some of the medications required or prescribed. These medications need to be more affordable for everybody.

I have learned a lot and made many connections using social media and the Internet. Twitter has been a huge help for me to find many resources, links and friends to help me through the tough times. Proper cellular service in rural Canada is essential for this reason. Contact with the outside world when you're isolated is more possible, so the use of smart phones and mobile Internet has been a huge help for me.

What else are we missing? What else haven't we thought of yet? Special conditions for ag producers may call for special solutions. Maybe a mental health app of some kind for smart phones to help diagnose issues or provide ideas to help out during rough periods would be useful. Perhaps teleconferencing or video conferencing with a therapist may help. Trying to stomp out the stigma of having a mental health condition is a huge hurdle to overcome, especially in agriculture.

● (0955)

Many people, including me, feel like mental health issues should be something individuals should be able to handle themselves. Some producers have tried to beat down these walls of stigma and have faced a barrage of bullying and personal attacks for it, myself included. We need to come up with a way to tell people they are also sick and need proper treatment. It's no different from having a cold or a cut on your hand. We need to end the stigma.

I hope this has given you some insight into my personal thoughts on mental health issues in agriculture. Thank you for having me here today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stanford.

Now we'll have Ms. Reynolds for six minutes.

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds (Owner Operator, LPG Farms): I grew up in Calgary, Alberta, and had an 11-year career in the film industry before meeting my husband and moving to rural Saskatchewan. There, I became a grain farmer. It didn't take me long to figure out how challenging, stressful and isolating farming can be.

While 2016 may have been my fourth crop year, it was the first time I stood and watched while my crop, worth literally hundreds of thousands of dollars, was destroyed in a 10-minute hail storm. It was also the first time in my life that I felt like a complete failure—a failure as a farmer, a failure as a spouse and a failure as a provider for my family. It was the first time, and sadly not the last, that I felt my only worth to my family was in my life insurance policy.

I would love to sit here in front of you all today and say that things are better and that I'm the only one in Canadian agriculture who has ever felt this way. To do so would be a lie. We are now struggling for our third year in a row. Weather extremes sabotage our ability to grow the bushels we need to make a profit. Commodity prices do not come close to covering our expenses. Transportation issues inhibit our ability to pay our bills on time. I no longer know what it feels like to live without stress. My husband now struggles with anxiety triggered by the stress of trying to farm and make ends meet. I have watched this anxiety bring him sobbing to his knees.

If you ask me in this moment if I hope my girls grow up wanting to take over our fourth-generation farm, I would tell you that I would encourage them to do anything but become farmers. However, the stark reality is that if we continue down this path, there will not be a farm for them to take over one day.

Right now I'm sure you're thinking that we must be bad farmers and that there must be something wrong with our business plan. After all, the point of a business is balancing risk while trying to make a profit. Do you know that grain farmers in Canada have the second-highest cost of inputs? That is the seed, seed treatment, fertilizer and chemicals we need to grow our crops. We also cannot come close to growing the bushels that other countries grow, thanks to our short growing season and dry climate. On an average year, the bushels I am able to produce on my fields do not cover my expenses, including my mortgage and land rent.

I need to work off-farm, not only to put food on my family's table but to also subsidize my farm expenses. If I worked as a teacher, nurse or banker, or if I were still working in the film industry, I would not be required to hold a second job to afford to do my first.

You see, I cannot raise the price I sell my crops for in order to help cover the rising expenses associated with growing my crops. When I need to move grain to pay bills, I try to find the best contract possible, but ultimately I have very little control over the price. I'm usually forced to sell at a time when prices are low from harvest pressure in order to cover bills that have been accumulating over the year. If a carbon tax is forced upon me, I stand to add an additional $30,000 to my expense list as well.

In February, I sat in a room full of 400 producers. We were tasked with standing up when a question asked applied to us. The first question was, "Have you ever lost a family member or friend to suicide?" Ninety per cent of the room stood up, and that broke my heart.

Farmers are struggling, not only in Canada but globally. We're struggling with high levels of stress, anxiety and depression. We cannot speak out or admit we are struggling because we are told to be strong. We are told to suck it up. We are told that we are not real farmers if we ask for help. If we seek treatment, we might be turned down for life insurance policies or watch our premiums skyrocket. Life insurance companies classify us as higher risk when we take care of our ourselves and seek help.

We run on three to five hours of sleep during the busy seasons—that is, seeding and harvest—and go for weeks without seeing much of our families and children. We spend 15-plus hours a day in equipment cabs by ourselves.

In isolation, we are running the numbers, worrying about our bills and getting further into our own heads. Sometimes we have our children with us as well. We have to juggle farming because we don't have access to child care. Often we are also volunteers in our communities as first responders who deal with being on scene for accidents and with the deaths of our friends and community members.

This summer, a friend posted that a farmer in her community had just died from suicide. I did not know the person, but I broke down sobbing at my kitchen table. When I took a moment to reflect on why the death of someone I did not know upset me so much, I was forced to bring light to a fear that I do not want to dwell on: the fear that surges up when I cannot get ahold of my husband. It is the fear that, just possibly, he has given in to the non-stop stress and anxiety of trying to provide for our family and farm.

The conversation is starting to change. Producers are starting to open up, but it is only a start. The stigma surrounding mental health in agriculture is still strong. We need support from each other, support from our communities, and we need services from our health care systems. Most importantly, we need to be able to afford to farm without having to work off the farm.

● (1000)

Thank you for your time. I appreciate the opportunity to be here to talk with you today.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Reynolds, for your testimony.

We'll have a round of questions.

Mr. Dreeshen, you have six minutes.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our guests.

I, too, farm. Right now we have 80% of our crop under snow. It's going to cover just a little bit of the basic expenses that we would have to pay for this month, but it won't be there for the rest of the year. I know exactly where you're coming from in so many different ways.

Quite frankly, people don't understand the significance of what it's like. You have to get on a $300,000 piece of equipment. You're stressed. You're getting three or four hours of sleep a day, so you're working 18-hour days. People don't seem to recognize what that is like.

We've had studies going on that say, "Look, this is the average income of a farmer; this is the money that they have coming in." They don't understand the investment. They don't understand just how significant that is.

Mr. Stanford, you spoke about some of the types of bullying and other issues, and the frustrations you have from that. What we're going to try to do here is come up with solutions. Perhaps you could expand a little bit on some of those stresses that you see from people who aren't prepared to move forward or who don't understand the need to move forward.

● (1005)

Mr. Sean Stanford: There are quite a few different levels to that. Some of the bullying and some of the questions or misunderstanding comes online from other folks who I either know very little or don't know at all. Others, even some of my family members, don't understand the stresses and the struggles that I go through.

I think a lot more producers have more issues than they let on about, even my own grandfather. Nobody knew about this until I started speaking up about it, but when he was younger than me, in his twenties, he was hospitalized for three days because of stress. He never even talked about it to any of his family members until recently. I think it's a good thing that we have these conversations and that we talk about this. The more we talk about it, the easier it's going to become for everybody to understand, but right now there's still quite a wall put up by everybody.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mehgin, you came from a different way of life and then went into farming. In one of the discussions we had earlier today, the frustration presented was that agriculture is being attacked. It is being attacked by different types of activists. I won't go through the list, because you would be well aware of what they would be. What we need to do is find a way to perhaps start in schools to determine how we can come up with solutions.

I was formerly a school teacher to support my farming habit. I see school groups writing letters to say that we have to save the bees and therefore we have to make sure that we get rid of the neonicotinoids. They just don't understand.

How do we get into the communities and into the urban areas so that they'll have some idea of the actual business? Then maybe we can start talking about how it affects the actual producers.

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: Yes. Right now most Canadians are removed at least three generations from the family farm. There is a huge disconnect there. I was one of them.

We need something that is national. Right now we have Agriculture in the Classroom in Saskatchewan. Alberta tries to do the same program. Nothing is coordinated. What I've really noticed recently is that there is a breakdown in the trust between the consumer, the farmer, the companies we buy our products from and Health Canada. The whole glyphosate case happened in the States. I joined that conversation and I was cheering, "Look, Health Canada reviewed it in 2017"—people don't trust that. They don't trust the regulatory bodies reviewing these issues.

We need to find a way to do education in the classrooms nationally, because we know that the best way to influence people my age or older is through their children or grandchildren bringing this information home. We need to do something nationally. We can maybe work with Health Canada to do that, to create something that fits the curriculum so that it's easy for the teacher, because it needs to be easy for the teacher, as you know. We can try to repair the trust on two sides, with the farmer and also with the government and Health Canada.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I think one of the other issues is to get people talking. One of the other groups earlier today said that they have professionals who go around—they called it a "milk run"—checking on farmers to see how they're doing. This was a Quebec-based group. My thought was about a way of branching this out into other areas. Would something like that work in your community, having professionals who understood agriculture and who would be able to go to various groups or communities or farms to be able to help?

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: Sean talked about using FaceTime with a therapist. I know there are therapists who do that right now. I think that would be more the route to go.

One of the problems linked to the stigma is that even if we were to have the services in my little town of 375 people, it's guaranteed that 99% of the people would not utilize them, because they don't want their neighbour to know they're utilizing them.

It needs to be something that would be discreet, if that person needs it to be discreet.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Reynolds.

Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen.

Mr. Peschisolido is next.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you.

Guests, thank you for coming out.

I'd like to begin by fundamentally disagreeing with you. You're not failures. You're not weak. You are perhaps the strongest witnesses I've ever heard at any committee. I commend you. What you're doing here to change the stigma is just amazing. My heart goes out to you, and I say thank you for what you're doing.

You talked about some of the challenges. I was intrigued, Mr. Stanford, when you talked about the app regarding mental health. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

● (1010)

Mr. Sean Stanford: As far as I know right now, nothing exists like that, although there might be something I'm not aware of.

Just being able to identify some of the issues or some of the feelings people are going through might lead them to the right path if they have some sort of mental health condition, whether it's a bit of anxiety, some depression, some stress, or whatever it is. If there were, perhaps, a checklist, where you fill out boxes on whether you feel this or that, then at least somebody would know if you're just having a bad day or if there are some deeper problems that you need to seek professional help for.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: You were talking about professional help and how you're dealing with the professional services. Health care and the provision of services is at the provincial level. It's more of a community function. Can you give us your thoughts on how you believe we could improve that? Just elaborate a little bit more. I think you're bang on. That is one of the things we need to fix.

Mr. Sean Stanford: As far as direct health care from doctors and nurses goes, in my area it's fairly good, except for having to travel a bit of a distance to get to a hospital or a clinic. That's not a huge deal.

The problem is the other services—getting a psychologist, a therapist, a counsellor. They are the ones who seem to have a huge waiting list, and they seem to be very expensive. I think that's where we need to try to do more work.

I don't know if this means training more of these specialists to be even more proactive in that particular area, or if there just needs to be more therapists and counsellors, but that's where there seems to be the biggest gap. It's in the actual mental health part of it. The direct doctors, nurses, and things seem to be okay, in my understanding.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: One other factor that you talked about was isolation. I can't relate, because I'm not a farmer, but in my neck of the woods, I've spoken to quite a few farmers who identified that issue as well, in different areas. There's Bruce May, who was involved in cranberries and berries, and there's Steve Easterbrook, who was involved with chickens, hens and cattle.

How can we fix that? How can we as a society, particularly the federal government, be helpful in getting at the issue of isolation?

Mr. Sean Stanford: That's a pretty intense question. The Internet is a huge help. I've known Megz for quite a while now. We met through social media, and we've become friends through it. Having access to good Internet out in the country where you're isolated has been a really huge help. To some people it may seem a small a thing or just a convenience, but for us it's getting to be almost a necessity, just to keep contact with the outside world.

The world is a different place now. There used to be county dances or little halls where there were parties every couple of weeks, or something like that. That doesn't really happen anymore. There are not nearly as many farmers or people out in the country as there used to be. With fewer of us in certain areas—we're more spread out—there must be some other way to keep in better contact with each other, because a lot of times the only ones who understand us are other producers.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Madam Reynolds, you talked about the cost of inputs, seeds and other things. Can you talk a little more about that?

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: I'm not sure why Canada is the second highest in the world. Japan is the only country in front of us. Where I farm in Saskatchewan, we have huge potash mines, so it's a little mind-boggling.

That's not something that we get to change. If we want to grow the best crop that we can, the only things we are able to control in growing that crop to its full potential are our inputs and the way we take care of that seed.

● (1015)

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Right.

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: Like Sean said, we can't control the weather. What we can control are our inputs, and that costs us a lot.

We need to go in being completely positive that even if we start out in a drought, it's going to turn around. If we treat that crop as it's growing with the herbicides and the fungicides and insecticides to kill the weeds so there's no competition, then we get that weather and suddenly we have a crop. If we haven't taken care of it to that point, we're not going to have a great crop.

We put those those inputs in with the hope that we're going to get the weather we need, and chances are we don't. This year, I had two and a half inches of rain. It was a drought year, not a great crop year. You spend that hoping you'll get it back, and oftentimes you don't.

As Sean was saying, we need to think of rural Internet basically as the land line. The land line used to be the necessity. We made sure, federally, that there were land lines everywhere. There was a grant to ensure that this was in place. I think that's now how we have to approach rural Internet, not only for connectivity but also for our business. Farming is a business.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Reynolds. Thank you, Mr. Peschisolido.

Go ahead, Mr. MacGregor, for six minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Chair.

I want to echo my colleague's comment to both of you for having the courage to come before a parliamentary committee that is televised.

You made reference to the fact that there's still a lot of stigma within your community. Trust me: By the very fact of your being here today and speaking out, I know there are a lot of farmers out there who are saying that's exactly how they feel. This is how we get the conversation started.

There are other professions, notably in the military and first responders, who very much have a culture where it's man up and just deal with the problem. They are starting to shift, because they have seen the effect on their members and they cannot be effective in the job they do.

You know this as a first responder, a volunteer firefighter. I have friends who do the same thing. I'm from a rural community. Often, they are first on the scene for a motor vehicle accident, and it could very well be someone they know in the community.

I want to start by thanking you both for coming.

There are so many factors that are beyond a farmer's control.

One of the strengths we have, especially within government, is to try to mitigate things when they happen. When you go through a hailstorm and it wipes out your crop, when you look at the suite of business risk management programs currently on offer, are they adequate and are they doing the job? What improvements can we make to give farmers a safety net from which we know they can rebound?

Do you have any comments?

Mr. Sean Stanford: There are some programs.

Last year, when we had a bit of a drought year and we didn't have a great crop, I still didn't quite qualify to get paid out on crop insurance. The crop insurance program is something I've paid into every year. With some of our drought fields this year, it looks as though I will get paid out.

It seems as though the levels where some of these claims can be made are too wide, or it needs to be more in favour of the producers than it is to the insurance companies. It doesn't matter how you try to insure your crop; you could still be losing money on all the inputs you put in.

As Megz said, inputs are expensive, and you still won't get an insurance payout, so you're wondering why you're paying into this insurance program when you can't even break even when you have a poor year.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Right.

Mr. Sean Stanford: I think that needs to be looked at a little closer, in my opinion.

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: With AgriStability, it doesn't really work for my farm, for instance, if you're trying to expand your operation or if you're new. We're technically fourth generation, but my husband started the farm up a couple of years before I came along. We're basically operating as a first-generation farm with our risk load and our debt load. A lot of what I have is debt—my equipment, my land—and that's not factored into expenses in AgriStability. The way that AgriStability is currently set up does not help as a risk management tool for my business.

Regarding crop insurance, I'm not sure if there's a way to do it, but there are private companies now that are coming up. Global Ag Risk is one of them. It's a really interesting business model for insurance that would fit my farm better, but the premiums are too expensive because they don't have that subsidy. I would be interested to see if we can take the provincial and federal subsidies and apply them to the insurance on our farm that we feel is best.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

You also mentioned the transportation problems. Earlier this year we had CN and CP Rail before the committee to explain the problems they are experiencing getting our crops to market. I'm from Vancouver Island. We can see the problems all the way down the line.

We have freighters parked in anchorages everywhere. Port infrastructure is simply not capable of handling what we want to do to export to the Asian market. The railways gave their assurances that they have a plan and that they're working on it, but all the subsequent witnesses who represented farm groups did not believe them. Now that we're half a year forward, is there anything that gives you hope from your point of view? Is there anything more we can do? I know we passed Bill C-49, but is there light on the horizon in this particular area?

● (1020)

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: I hope so. I've been in some conference calls with CN about this, and they do have a plan. They're working really hard. It's going to come down to what our winter is like and seeing how they implement that plan. Right now I think the mood of farmers across western Canada, especially ones in Saskatchewan who are completely landlocked, is they are going to believe it when they see it.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: We've heard a lot of witnesses say there is a disconnect between the consumer and the farmer. When people go to a grocery store, they don't automatically make that connection to where their food came from and how it was produced. I don't think we value farmers enough in our society. What more can we do to change that? Is there a conversation going on with the grain farmers of Canada or the subsidiary provincial organizations about how we make school children more aware of this, how we value the food producers who put this amazing product on our plates?

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: I think education is going to be the big one in finding something that is federal, not just provincial, and trying to put programs together that may or may not have a great influence.

There's something going on in Europe. In the U.K. they're doing FaceTime with a farmer in classrooms, which I think is a really great idea. You build trust with that farmer. You communicate, ask questions. Then it will be interesting to see some of the stuff Health Canada wants to do with labelling, creating a sustainability label on food. You will need to tread very lightly, because when I grow my crops in Saskatchewan with zero till, I have a lot less moisture than a farmer growing wheat in Manitoba.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Reynolds. I have to move on.

Mr. Drouin, you have six minutes.

Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Stanford and Ms. Reynolds, thanks for sharing your story.

When we talk about stigma, I think the fact that you're sharing your story today is breaking those barriers.

I want to touch on social media. Maybe Mr. Stanford, because you're a fourth-generation farmer and you were there, you probably remember the days when social media was not there, I hope when you were helping your dad or your mom. How do you feel about the pressures of social media?

Mr. Dreeshen talked about animal activists being online and the pressures of society. When you're farming back home, you're isolated in some way, but at the same time you have the whole world putting this pressure on you. Talk to me about that. Has that impacted you at all?

Mr. Sean Stanford: It has. It used to bother me a lot more than it does now, because you're never going to change the mind of some people. Certain animal activists are always going to think farm producers or cattlemen are the worst people in the world. A group of people in the middle are trying to find their way and trying to decide if the farmers or PETA are telling the truth.

All I can do.... Even on my own social media, I love sharing my story, sharing my farm, showing pictures. I'm doing the best job I can. I put my story forward, and hopefully if somebody has a question about it, they can ask and I'll answer it honestly. I'm here. Obviously I have nothing to hide. I'm willing to answer any questions about my farm and my production.

As far as I'm concerned, Canada produces the best-quality and healthiest food in the world. I don't see any reason we should be ashamed or afraid to answer questions about it.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Hear, hear.

You've mentioned that when you shared your story, you were bullied. We had a witness last week who said the same thing, but after a while the community came around. Are you feeling that? I'm asking the same thing of Ms. Reynolds, if she wants to answer.

Mr. Sean Stanford: Yes, definitely. It's very different now from how it was. Mental health in agriculture is really just starting to turn into a huge thing. It's starting to snowball a bit now.

If I had been talking about this a few years ago, there would have been a lot more pressure on me and questions like, "What are you doing?" or "What are you thinking about?" Now it's really starting to catch on. People are starting to understand and say, "Hey, we actually have some of these issues, too. We don't have to beat this guy down, because we're actually suffering from some of the same problems; we just didn't know about it", or, "Maybe we can all work together and try to solve these things."

I'm not a crazy person. It's just that once in a while I need some things to help me straighten myself out. It's not the end of the world. People are finally starting to understand that.

● (1025)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Within your community, have you started a community-based group, or are you just sharing your story with us here today?

Mr. Sean Stanford: I've talked to a lot of people individually at home. There's not necessarily a group, but I'll talk to anybody, whether it's ag producers, friends of mine from school days or other people in the community. We've talked about it openly, but there's not necessarily a support group.

Mr. Francis Drouin: In your opening statement you mentioned that an app could be helpful to a certain segment of the population who feel they may need to reach out for help. One of the things we're looking at is how the federal government can help.

The provinces deliver services, but from a marketing perspective, do you feel that the Canadian Mental Health Association is doing enough to target producers, in terms of saying it's okay to talk about mental health? Are you aware?

Mr. Sean Stanford: I haven't actually seen a lot from them. The most I've seen or talked about or heard about to do with mental health is through the Do More Agriculture Foundation in Saskatchewan. They're a great group, and they're almost a middle-man between, say, the Canadian Mental Health Association and the producers. A lot of farmers or producers don't know exactly where to go for the information. There could be more of a direct route straight to producers. They just need to know how to channel us and how to talk to us directly.

Mr. Francis Drouin: In big organizations they often develop a peer system by which they train a few folks in the organizations to identify those who might be impacted by mental health. Do you think a peer system could be helpful in your community?

Again, Ms. Reynolds mentioned that discretion is extremely important, and I certainly support that. Do you think that would be helpful?

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: That's what Do More Ag is trying to do. Right now they've partnered with FCC and bringing mental health first aid into rural communities. That's a huge step forward, because we can be at a certain place where we're able to realize, "Okay, we need to talk about it. Maybe we need to reach out for help", but there are a lot of times when we don't know we're there. Unless you've been trained in mental health first aid, you don't know how to recognize that.

The people we deal with the most may be the input people, the other farmers when we're in our busy seasons, or our bankers. It's important for those people to know how to identify that I'm struggling and that maybe they need to help me get help. Bringing mental health first aid into rural communities, if we can, would be really crucial.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Reynolds.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Poissant, you have six minutes.

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.): Thank you very much for your testimony. The information you provide us today will form the basis of our study. We need to know exactly what is happening on the ground, and you are in the best position to tell us that given what you have experienced.

I was a dairy farmer for 40 years, and I had my own struggles. Earlier we talked about farm rallies and the fun we had together. I remember, when I was young, that we walked a kilometer down the range with the cows. People were patient. Ours was a nice peaceful type of farming. We could go to mass on Sunday mornings and then sit on the porch talking with people on Sunday afternoons.

The situation isn't at all the same today. I'm afraid we're reaching a point of no return. I'd like to know the future you envision for our farming industry.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Stanford: I don't know if we have necessarily gone to the point of no return. Agriculture definitely has changed. There are fewer farms, but they seem to be larger. There are fewer individual producers, as you said, than when you would meet with a bunch of your farming colleagues on the church steps and have a visit or something.

We need to have better contact with producers in the same scenarios. Because there are fewer of us, we need to maybe look farther to find the same group of people, the same number of people. As I said, social media and rural Internet are a huge help.

I know that at home there are numerous Hutterite colonies that don't really associate with many individual farmers on a social basis. However, they take up a large portion of the land, so there are fewer and fewer individual farms at home.

It is changing. I don't think it's unsalvageable; we just need to adjust our way of thinking.

● (1030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Thank you very much.

Earlier you said you were employed on a farm. You come from the farming sector. Your employer must be aware of what you're going through.

Does he provide good support?

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Stanford: I actually own my own farm, so I am my own employer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: I see.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Stanford: My wife does keep a pretty good eye on me. She is quite supportive. I farm alongside my father, so he has been a fairly good help since I've opened up about some of these things with him. He doesn't really understand all of the details of it either.

It is different when you work for yourself, in that you have to make all of these decisions. There is a lot more stress than, say, just being a worker for wages or something like that. I'm not saying that working for wages is less stressful by any means, but I definitely feel more weight on my shoulders as a farm owner.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: You mentioned waiting times for services. On that subject, I can cite the example of my son, who broke his hand in a farm accident. The posted waiting time at the hospital was 24 hours. He couldn't wait. He had to go back to his farm work. With livestock, you can't afford to be absent.

How could we recommend that waiting times be reasonable for farmers, whether it's for physical or psychological problems?

[*English*]

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: With regard to wait times at hospitals for physical injuries, those are going to vary by location, obviously, with population issues. On the mental health side of it, it could be half a year before I get in to see a therapist or a psychologist. I think the mental health side of things would be an area to try to improve.

As Sean said, I'm also a volunteer firefighter, and through the volunteer firefighting department I can get an appointment within a week. I would love to see something set up in the same way across Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Thank you.

We were all young at one time. Before going into farming, are you really aware of what's in store for you? I knew right from the start, but it wasn't the type of farming we have today.

How did you feel when you decided to take up farming?

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Stanford: It was a difficult decision, I suppose, but it was an easy decision at the same time. I knew that I would not have a super-easy life ahead of me and that I would be putting in a lot of long hours, but it really was what I wanted to do.

I guess if your heart is in it and if you are passionate about it, then the decision is a lot easier. Trying to deal with some of the struggles along the way is kind of the challenging point, but I wouldn't change what I do for anything in the world. I love being my own boss and taking care of the land and producing a crop. There's nothing quite like it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stanford.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Poissant.

[*English*]

Now we have Mr. Motz and Shipley, I think.

Go ahead for six minutes.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you, Chair, and thank you both for the courage you've demonstrated today in being here, sharing your stories and speaking on behalf of a sector and its struggles that aren't always well understood.

We know that people who grow up in the country rely on each other. It's the only resource you really have. When you look at that community structure, does that community structure, one that relies on helping each other, help deal with mental health?

● (1035)

Mr. Sean Stanford: It definitely helps, but as I said, there's not quite the structure there used to be. I can't even remember the last time I was at a community dance, and they used to have them quite often.

Mr. Glen Motz: Right.

Mr. Sean Stanford: I can't remember the last time I got together with some of the locals and just sat around and had a coffee or a beer or whatever. Times have changed. It seems that instead of farmers wanting to be friendly to each other all the time, it's almost more of a competition nowadays.

Mr. Glen Motz: It limits the ability to share some of the struggles you're going through personally.

Mr. Sean Stanford: It does, yes. I would say that's a fair point. It does limit it, especially, like I said, with land competition. The competition to buy farmland at home is so huge that sometimes you get put off by one of your neighbours, or maybe you're upset with him about something. It is a little tougher to have a tight-knit community like that right now, I would say.

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: I think that education comes into that as well, because if someone breaks a hip, it's really easy to get a meal train set up to make sure that there's food going to their house and to do what we can. Maybe they can't run the tractor, so we're going to go and help them harvest, but when it's a mental health issue, people don't know how to deal with that. People don't know how to help. They're scared of overstepping. They're scared of making somebody feel weak or like they can't handle things.

I think it involves education, because there are times, if you're having a complete breakdown, that a person showing up to help you harvest or to bring you supper would be great, but I think that with mental health and the stigma around it, we don't want to go there. We don't want to impose. We just don't know how to help.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you for those responses.

Unfortunately, I've seen in my career a lot of individuals struggling with mental health challenges. Some of them end up in the justice system. Some of them, unfortunately, take their own lives. The impact that has on a community is devastating. We know that.

Based on your experiences, what actions or recommendations would you have this committee be aware of? In our committees as local leaders, should we be sharing more resources and bringing people together? How do we do that effectively in a farming community? How does it work?

You've shared some of the challenges; what suggestions do you have to make it better?

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: I think it would be bringing in mental health first aid so people know about it. A lot of people don't even know that mental health is something that we deal with every day and that it's a moving scale. There needs to be so much education around it.

Perhaps having an app, having a way for us to be able to.... I'm stuck in my combine because it's harvest time, but I need to be able to reach out to somebody. I've got my phone. If there's an app and there's a therapist on the other end, I could do that. That would be a way to get inside our offices, so to speak, when we need it.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you for those comments. I have one very quick question, then I'll pass it off to Mr. Shipley.

Sometimes there's a disconnect between decisions governments make and the impact they have on the people they're making those decisions about.

Last summer there were tax implications announced by the current government, and it had a huge impact on farming and farming operations. From what you've heard in your communities and what you've experienced from that, can you explain the impact that has had on you guys personally and what you've heard in your communities?

Mr. Sean Stanford: Definitely the cost of production went up. Fertilizer, fuel and a lot of products that we need to use turned more expensive, definitely. In return, we did not get any more profit for the product that we produced. All the new taxes did was just take more money out of our profits, out of our bottom line, so we had to try to figure out where to tighten up to try to either make the same money or just try not to go broke.

It was really tough. It's hard, and it's an ongoing struggle. There are also new taxes in Alberta, as well, and it just seems to be getting harder and harder every day. We have to find other ways. If we can't change the taxes or if we can't get rid of the taxes, we have to figure out a way to still be cost-effective and make some money.

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: Regarding the succession aspect of agriculture, a lot of farms in Canada—90%—are family run and family operated. There's the succession piece of how we convey that on to the next generation. A $1-million capital gains exemption is nothing. If you're looking at the cost of land, that is nothing.

For us, it's not a transfer of wealth to be taking over a family farm; it's a transfer of debt. It's a transfer of debt we'll work our whole lives to pay off.

● (1040)

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Mehgin, in your opening statement, you talked about being at a gathering of some 400 people, and there was a high percentage—some 90%—who you said had known someone who had come to suicide. That's a large gathering of people. I don't know what session it was, but will something come out of that to help us in terms of advice or direction from that number of people? If there is, could you give it to us?

The Chair: Unfortunately, Mr. Shipley, we will not have time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Breton, you have six minutes.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for being here today. We appreciate the people on the ground appearing before the committee. It helps us more clearly understand the situation, find solutions and make recommendations to assist them in future.

We know that a farmer's work is solitary work. Farmers have their families and friends around them, but they don't always have colleagues or bosses to rely on. They are their own boss.

I don't know whether you were here when the first panel of witnesses appeared earlier. They included representatives of an organization that does preventive work using what they call field workers. These people, who are psychologists or social workers, make random visits to farmers to explain the services they can provide them.

Farmers don't always have time to consult someone when they don't feel well. Professionals go to the farmers, ask them questions and determine with them what services they can provide.

Do you have access to that kind of service? Would you be interested in having an organization provide those kinds of services in your province?

[*English*]

Ms. Mehgin Reynolds: There isn't currently anything like that in place that I know of. I think that could be a great resource, even just to bring everyone to a community hall so that they know what is available, what's out there and where the next steps would be. Maybe it's not that they need to tell everyone that they're talking to someone, but just to learn more of the information.

You're right: a lot of people don't know what is out there.

Mr. Sean Stanford: There is nothing like that where I live in Alberta, either, that I'm aware of. I am sure I would have heard of it by now if there were.

I think it is a good idea. I don't know how spread out the land base is of farmers and producers in Quebec, but I know Alberta is a fairly large area, so it would be a bit of a logistical challenge to be able to drive around and visit so many farms. However, I like the idea.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Thank you for being here today. We very much appreciate your testimony. We sense your passion and encourage you to continue your good work.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Breton.

[*English*]

Thank you, Mr. Stanford and Ms. Reynolds, for being here with us today.

What you were able to share is very valuable. As a farmer myself, I've been through those. We keep referring to that bell curve. I've been on both sides. I certainly appreciate it. I know it will certainly help us in trying to find a way to serve our agriculture population better.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, everyone.

[*English*]

This is all the time we have, and we shall see you at the next meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: http://www.ourcommons.ca

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante : http://www.noscommunes.ca